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EDITORIAL OPINIONS OF THE LEADING JOURNALS UPON CURRENT TOPICS—COMPILED EVERY DAY FOR THE EVENING TELEGRAPH.

An Imbecile Pulpit.

From the Independent. In a sermon before the New School Presbyterian General Assembly, at Rochester, the Rev. Dr. Samuel H. Hopkins declared that the Episcopal denomination of the United States had "an imbecile pulpit." The remark was made by the retiring moderator of the Assembly, in his official capacity, and in a city which had recently welcomed the Episcopal bishops with the same hospitality which the citizens were at that moment showing to the Presbyterian Commissioners. On the Assembly's "sea of upturned faces," this squally remark blew up a general ripple of dissent. The daily papers of Rochester urged an official retraction by the Assembly, as due to the dignity of that body. This, however, was awkward and not to be done. But the pastor of the church in which the Assembly held its sessions contrived to make a neat public reference to the offensive remark, and in a semi-official way disavowed it. But it still stands in the official reports, and will not fade from men's memories—an illustration of the Chinese proverb that "An ill word, once out of the mouth, cannot be brought back by a coach and six."

We refer to the incident, not for its importance, but for its suggestiveness. Has the Episcopal Church "an imbecile pulpit?" Is Dr. Tyng, amid the ruins of St. George's, reduced to "an imbecile pulpit?" Does Bishop McVane pursue his bishopric in "an imbecile pulpit?" Has Dr. Schenck come all the way from Baltimore to Brooklyn to fill "an imbecile pulpit?" Does the Rev. Phillips Brooks shake Philadelphia from "an imbecile pulpit?" Did Bishop White wear out his long and saintly life in "an imbecile pulpit?" Did Dr. Milner bequeath his forgotten name to be linked with the memory of "an imbecile pulpit?"

No. The remark of Dr. Hopkins was a distilled drop of the quintessential tincture of sectarianism. The fact that such a remark fell from the lips of so eminent, able, and noble a clergyman, shows how unconsciously, yet how instinctively and irresistibly, a sectarian spirit bewilders the judgment and good taste of men whom the Church would make broad, but whom the sect keeps narrow.

It is against such sectarianism that this journal lately uttered its protest in "An Editorial Soliloquy." It is against such sectarianism that these columns are, if possible, to be made the message-bearers of a better-tempered, more manly, and more catholic Christianity. It is against such sectarianism that the sects themselves, if they consult their own usefulness, will be glad to see a perpetual protest made in their behalf by an unsectarian sheet.

Christian union between different denominations is just now a lively theme with the religious press. "The tendencies of the age," says Dr. Hopkins (in this same sermon), "are all in the direction of Church unity." But what is this moderate and moderate method of promoting Church unity? He presents us the spectacle of a Presbyterian professor saying to an Episcopal bishop, "Sir, you are an imbecile; let us, therefore, twain, be one!"

Now, a reason why this journal lately severed its supposed official connection with the noblest of Christian denominations, the heritage of the Pilgrims, on which may be the God of our Fathers bestow His blessing!—was, that we were constantly goaded to fight a battle against Presbyterianism, by people who foolishly supposed that such a warfare would advance the interests of Congregationalism. But after our act of affectionate excommunication, the very first spectacle offered to the eyes of the Christian world is the Moderator of the Presbyterian Assembly drawing a glittering sword and striking at Episcopalianism. But is it pleasing, either to angels or to men, to see the Rev. Dr. Hopkins rubbing burrs into the hair of the Episcopal clergy? Such conduct by one Christian denomination towards another will make it necessary, as Whittier mentions in his lines on Major Stearns,

"To put to the Lord's work the sinner, When saints fail to do it."

But the question arises, What is "an imbecile pulpit?" It is a pulpit that lacks genius, courage, and fire; a pulpit submissive to follow, instead of bold to lead, public opinion; a pulpit inefficient towards the stirring questions of the time, and hesitant to incur the reproach of holding advanced ideas; a pulpit that is moulded by the very men whom it is sent to mould. There are thousands of such American pulpits. They belong to all denominations. They rustle their silks in every diocesan convention, and utter their platitudes to every synod. They are the self-appointed censors of nobler men who, whether in pulpits or out, are seeking to serve God in their day and generation. They bring the Church at first into weakness and at last into reproach.

Against all such pulpits, if the pulpitizer of the General Assembly will uplift a voice, we will join him in the protest. But let him not attack the Episcopal and shield the Presbyterian denomination. Let him administer his judgment equally upon all the guilty.

What is the present tone and character of the American pulpit? There was a time when the great body of the American churches, of all denominations, and both pulpits and pews, lay under the ban of complicity with the hideous crime of slavery. An eloquent voice in one of the ablest of Presbyterian pulpits started the country with the declaration that "the American Church was the chief bulwark of American slavery." It is sorrowfully and unparadoxically true that during the anti-slavery agitation, when the struggling cause first cried aloud for the help of all good men, the majority of ministers and church members, even in the North, were the abettors of human bondage. But in process of time, as the Northern churches were split asunder by the invading wedge of the penetrating question, every Church thus cleft in twain let in upon itself a great light. During the war the Northern churches girded the imperiled Government with a stalwart league of defense. The Northern pulpits "spoke as with tongues of fire." Never in the religious history of this country did the American clergy so nobly fulfil their mission as during the war. Mouths that had for years been dumb towards liberty, then had a voice. Hearts that never before had beaten for the slave, then yearned for him in prayer. The ears of this generation before heard so many good and so few poor sermons as during the war—not merely on public topics, but on the whole range of pulpit topics. Ministers never before stood so near to God, for the reason that they never before stood so near to man. The holy oil of consecration with which that struggle anointed the Northern clergy still remains on a thousand brows. If "there were giants in those days," there are giants in these next succeeding days. It is our deliberate conviction that the religious

bodies of the country—its conferences, councils, and assemblies—have for the last three or four years exerted more influence on leading national questions than has been exerted by all the political caucuses and conventions of the same period. For instance (speaking of the New School General Assembly), we recall with delight the scene which we witnessed in that body when it met in Brooklyn two or three years ago, and gave a unanimous vote for impartial suffrage, before any political convention of equal magnitude had uttered a word on the subject. Without the help, sympathy, zeal, and cooperation of the Northern churches, the war for the Union would have been a failure. But if the nation had need of her churches then, she has equal need of them now. What this Government lacks is moral quickening; religious ideas must be made to penetrate political statutes; Christian principle must take the place of party expediency. In short, the Republic, if it is to promote the welfare of its citizens, must be remoulded upon the basis of Christianity.

A Church that has no influence on the times in which it stands, might as well have belonged to a former age. It is a happy omen that the American churches, which for twenty years were dead, have arisen to newness of life! Nevertheless, God forbid that we should settle down into the easy and smooth-tongued business of praising, the churches or their pulpits. For religions, like our civil institutions—our religions, like our civil leaders—are equally full of faults and flaws. Both alike need God's grace and man's forbearance. The Church, like the State, ought to be pruned with a busy knife of criticism to keep its branches fruitful and its leaves green. "Shall not judgment begin at the house of God?" Yes, verily. But when one Christian denomination congratulates itself and defames its rival, it is generally a sign that both deserve, equally, the same condemnation.

Let every minister, therefore, whether in the Episcopal Church or the Presbyterian, whether in the Baptist or the Methodist—ask himself the question whether or not he stands in an "imbecile pulpit." If a man ordained for the ministry is without a sacred passion for his work, certain it is that he makes "an imbecile pulpit." If his heart burns not with love towards all his fellow-creatures, high and low, then no matter what culture may sit upon his lips, he is the weak master of "an imbecile pulpit." If he is ashamed or afraid to declare "the whole counsel of God," he is a poor prisoner in "an imbecile pulpit." If he is an idolater of his own creed, holding that every man who believes something different is a heretic and infidel, he is the unappointed prophet of "an imbecile pulpit." If he goes to the General Association only to make an exhibition of pitiful narrowness, meanness, and bigotry, he publicly puts himself in the pillory of "an imbecile pulpit." If he sheds tears over heresies of others, but publishes volumes of heresies of his own, he shows an amiable foretoken of "an imbecile pulpit."

It may be that a Presbyterian moderator, in taking the trouble to slander a single denomination, has spoken a measure of truth of all. If so, better that word is spoken, who feel the scourge of small cords in the Master's hand driving them from the temple, than for those whom His divine indignation at this moment frowns upon, blasts, consumes, and shrives in "an imbecile pulpit."

Arise, John Knox, and preach before the General Assembly! Awake, Martin Luther, and burn the Pope's bull before the General Assembly! Oh, for a stalwart pulpit!—a pulpit muscular with the strength of strong men!—a pulpit to shake the land and be itself unshaken!—a pulpit to fight the general enemy, and not to stab its faithful friends in the back; a pulpit to deliver the bolt of God's wrath, and yet utter the "still, small voice!"—a pulpit to fling down or pick up the gauntlet of defiance to all evil!—a pulpit to keep unrolled the perpetual banner of the Holy War!—a pulpit clothed with the shadow of the Cross of Christ!—a pulpit covered by the wings of an unseen dove!

Negro Suffrage and the Democratic Party.

From the Times. The most active of the Southern opponents of reconstruction assail negro suffrage as the obnoxious feature of the Congressional plan. The exclusion of a limited class from the franchise and from office furnishes a certain ground of objection. But the enfranchisement of the negro is the change which overrides all others, and furnishes the text on which orators and writers appeal to the passions and prejudices of the Southern people. Ex-Governor Perry makes it the chief point of assault in all his letters. "Better military government and even confiscation," he says in substance, "than government resting upon negro votes."

The absurdity of this outcry becomes apparent when it is remembered that in February last certain prominent Southern politicians recommended to their respective States the adoption of impartial suffrage as a measure of compromise. Certainly, ex-Governor Sharkey, who is even more conspicuous than Mr. Perry in the ranks of opponents to reconstruction law, was a prominent participant in the movement which but four months ago contemplated a distinct affirmation of the principle of negro suffrage. Parsons, of Alabama, Marvin, of Florida, and Worth, of North Carolina, were also concerned in the movement, and were thus committed as plainly as Sharkey to the principle objected to as part of the pending scheme. They had as their prompter President Johnson himself, who in 1865, writing to Sharkey, then Military Governor of Mississippi, recommended the incorporation into the Constitution of that State as a preliminary to restoration to the Union. These circumstances show the inconsistency of the noisiest enemies of reconstruction, and the folly—perhaps the dishonesty—of those who avow their sympathy with the Democratic party of the North because of its hostility to negro suffrage.

How little sympathy these receive at the South may be inferred from the platform of the "Conservative Union Party," which was recently christened at Atlanta. The Conservative Unionists, so called, reiterated and indorsed Governor Perry's preference for military despotism over government organized under the law. But they avoided his blunder in reference to negro suffrage. Instead of denouncing it, they approved it. And they supplemented an approval of the extension of the homestead principle to freedmen, with a declaration in favor of exempting them from taxation for ten years. Evidently, the managers of this new party recognize the future voting-power of the freedmen, and the expediency of conciliating them with special immunities as a substitute for the immediate political power conferred by the plan in progress. The attempt will be futile, and the suggested substitute cannot weigh against the bait of confiscation; but the fact is noteworthy that the extreme anti-negro position assumed by Messrs. Perry and Sharkey is, in effect, repudiated by the organized opponents of the law.

The Northern Democrats, meanwhile, have lost no opportunity of proving their title to the confidence of the negro-fetters of the South. Again and again within the last few months they have reaffirmed adherence to the maxim that "this is a white man's Government," and that the black man shall have no lot or part in it. The bold and aggressive bid of the Chicago Times, and the prudent promptings of the World, have been systematically disregarded by their party at the great majority of whom are to-day bitter foes to the recognition of the negro's political equality. Though the events of the last six years had not been heard of. The latest evidence has been afforded by the Pennsylvania Democratic Convention, which met at Harrisburg on Tuesday. Not content with a general and most malignant attack upon the policy of Congress, it adopted a resolution pledging the party to oppose any amendment of the Constitution of the State giving to negroes the right of suffrage. In Pennsylvania, therefore, and in Ohio and generally throughout the North, the party at this moment stands committed against the principle of political equality regardless of color or race, which forms the foundation of Southern reconstruction. On this ground, coupled with a denial of the right of Congress to meddle with the suffrage of the States, the party at this moment stands committed against the principle of political equality regardless of color or race, which forms the foundation of Southern reconstruction. On this ground, coupled with a denial of the right of Congress to meddle with the suffrage of the States, the party at this moment stands committed against the principle of political equality regardless of color or race, which forms the foundation of Southern reconstruction.

Nothing, however, could more surely secure the permanent defeat of the Democratic party. It cannot hope to carry the North on an issue adverse to the whole action of Congress. And it cannot by any possibility obtain the future control of the South by hostility to the race whose votes will hereafter be an important element in Southern political affairs. With negro suffrage irrevocably established among the masses, the Southern people will naturally affiliate with the party of the North which favors the voluntary adoption by all the States of the principle which is being forced upon the South. General Longstreet has well stated this aspect of the case, in these terms:—"If I appreciate the principles of the Democratic party, its prominent features oppose the enfranchisement of the colored man, and deny the right to the subject race to vote in suffrage, except by the States individually. These two features have a tendency to exclude Southern men from the party; for the colored man is already disfranchised, and we cannot seek alliance with a party that would restrict his rights. The exclusive right of the States to legislate upon the subject of public equality, or franchise of the blacks, whether for better or for worse, a fixture among us, it appears, therefore, that those who cry loudest against this new order of things as public equality are those whose principles would fix it upon us without a remedy. Hence it becomes us to insist that suffrage be extended to the colored man, and fully tested. The people of the North should adopt what they have forced upon us; and if it be proved to be a mistake, they should remedy it under the same republican principles of uniform laws upon suffrage."

The Northern Democracy, then, by arraying themselves as a party against negro suffrage, overshoot the mark. They are fighting against facts and fate. For negro suffrage, already an established fact. And the necessity of adapting themselves to the situation, and making the best of events which are not likely to be reversed, is forcing itself upon the minds of the leading men of the South with a rapidity which we are apt to underestimate. Governor Orr is not the only Southern leader who has an account to settle with the party which tempted and then deserted his section. And General Longstreet expresses the conviction of an influential class, when he refuses to serve under the banner of the Democratic party because its leading ideas and principles are of the past. A party which clings to the prejudices of caste begotten of slavery after slavery has been abolished, cannot hope to regain the direction of national affairs.

The President's Duty to the Country.

From the Tribune. We have ventured in a quiet but emphatic way to warn the President and his advisers from a policy which can only bring discomfort to the country and additional disaster to his administration. We have entreated him to let well enough alone, and to be content to execute the law entrusted to him frankly and without reservation. We tried to show that he was, as it were, upon probation, and that the country was watching him with jealous, sensitive eyes. We have been especially anxious that he would not be led by the Copperheads into another war upon Congress. This warning is misinterpreted by the World, which insists that, because we tell the President that he is demanding a summer session of Congress, and opening a new line of assault upon his administration.

We dismiss from consideration the temper of our contemporary. What is the situation? Congress adjourned after having assigned to the President a certain duty. It was understood that he would perform it. Impeachment is only prevented by President Johnson's good sense, his conservatism, his generous obedience to Congress. He was called upon to execute a very distasteful law. It was gall and wormwood to his Executive, but still it was law. It meant that all that he had done in the South should be undone—that the contrivances he called "States," and the mobs he called "Congressional delegations," should be disregarded; because in their creation he had ignored the principle of impartial suffrage. The President wanted the South to come back as it went out—without an aristocratic ruling, and the negro neither free nor slave, but the nondescript "freedman." Congress wanted the South to come back with the people ruling—the interests of labor recognized, and no distinction of color. Congress was every loyal State; and the President's policy, to use a Hebrew metaphor, was broken as with a rod of iron, and dashed in pieces like a potter's vessel. The law passed was extraordinary, but it was meant to meet an extraordinary case. It was practically a war measure. We sustain it, and insist upon its execution, although we trust that it may never have a parallel in our history. It is the only means by which the South can be pacified. It is a generous, liberal measure, certainly more so than any future measure will probably be. If the subject is again before Congress, its provisions are plain. It means that the Southern States shall be reconstructed on certain principles; that the Generals shall superintend the work; and that the Generals shall in command shall be absolute. To us there is nothing plainer. Take the case of Governor Wells! Does any one suppose that Congress intended that Governor Wells should have an independent, exclusive control of all the resources of the State should be at his disposal—and that with these resources he might or might not aid in the work of reconstruction? Are we to believe that General Sheridan was to have a mere nominal command, like that of Meade in Philadelphia, or Halleck in San Francisco, and to be at the mercy of any

civilian that a majority of Rebels might call "Governor." It is the most nonsense to suppose such a thing. We presume a Governor and the conventions in these States, and in the performance of certain functions the office is necessary. But the power to rule—the power of compelling obedience—was lodged in the hands of a general of the army. It is the imperial power of the people, entrusted for a time to certain soldiers, charged so to use that power that the Rebel South should be brought properly reconstructed to the Union. The President had failed to do it. The States themselves, as guided by disinterested men, were apathetic, the politicians insolent, and between the President, the people, and the politicians, the Southern States threatened to become diseased members of the body politic, to be even worse than Poland, or Ireland, or Hungary. To prevent this the Military bill was passed.

Since the passage of that bill the South has been at peace. The Generals have done well, and the conventions in the North and South progress rapidly. The farmers are busy. The freedmen are becoming freemen. The Generals have found it necessary to make a few removals, but only a few. While under Johnson's plan we had massacres in Memphis and Alexandria and New Orleans—massacres as bloody as memorable battles—under the Military bill we have had only one small riot in Mobile. A New Orleans Convention was murdered in July, 1866. In June, 1867, a Convention will meet as calmly as it would in Boston. We have in the North and South an era of good feeling. Our statesmen are in the South instructing the people. Rebel Generals like Longstreet are perfectly willing to trust the fortunes of the South with the Republican party. The people are wisely submitting to necessity. We think it not extravagant to say that, if reconstruction is permitted to progress calmly, we shall have the Southern States in the next Electoral College. We trust that they will send Republican electors, but that is a secondary matter. That is our concern as Republicans, and we trust to convince the people. But if the President does not interfere, the South will be in the Union, the nation will be reconstructed, the people will be secure in their rights, the South will be a land of liberty, the Military bill will never live again in our happy country, and our brigadiers will surrender their power to the people, and go back to the army to the performance of mere military duties.

With this prospect dawning upon the country, what is the duty of the President? It is an easy thing for him to make trouble. He can probably receive no advice more welcome than that given by the World. He has a subservient Cabinet. A Secretary of State who can maintain confidences with McCracken in reference to the table talk of Ministers like Motley, will not hesitate to advise the President to decided measures. Stanbery will write twenty opinions, showing just how the President can drive a coach and six through any law of Congress. Mr. Stanton will counter-sign the orders which sent Terry to the mountains, by preventing it to end itself. He is walking upon the true path now, and he can only step beyond it to bring peril upon himself and the country.

Extreme Journalism in the South.

From the Herald. For many years preceding the war, and during its continuance, the extreme character of opinions expressed by the Southern papers fomented the bitterest feelings of that section against the North. The newspaper medium was, perhaps, the most fertile in propagating sentiments which, by skillfully misrepresenting both sections, led to hostilities between them. Unhappily, there is very little disposition to abandon this mischievous influence noticeable in the present tone of these journals; nor are the fruits of such preachings difficult to discover. The extremes of party discussion are now to be found in two classes of papers, each of which is battling for mastery in the South—the secession and the radical journals. To the irritating effects of their articles upon the public mind can be traced, in a great measure, the present condition of Tennessee, as illustrated by the petition of a portion of its citizens to the President, praying for the interposition of regular troops to protect them from the outrages of "Browlow's militia."

To the same cause we may attribute in a great degree the conflicts between our military commanders in Louisiana and Alabama and the civil authorities of the leading cities of those States. We had reason to suppose that the controversy which was ended by the canon and the bayonet was finally concluded as between the North and the South; and so it was, in so far as the common sense of the fighting elements on both sides was concerned. But the party journals seem disposed to keep the wounds open to gratify their own very small desires; and hence we find new barriers to the reconstruction of the South raised from day to day, by appeals to the passions of the people. The plumes of the newspapers which are not wholly contemptible only because they are conspicuous for mischief. We observe, however, that this evil is correcting itself. The press of the South is evidently fast losing hold upon popular opinion. The violence of its partisanship is becoming offensive to the sober second thoughts of the Southern mind, which is now moulding itself to the new condition of things; and people that they are ceasing to be guided by the parities of the secession organs, and hissing when they can no longer sting. Some of these journals are already learning a lesson and are changing their tone, while others, like the Richmond Times, are giving up the ghost.

The spasmodic effort to establish a radical press in the South does not appear to be crowned with much success. In almost all the leading towns and cities of the Southern States, radical newspapers with little support that they can hardly eke out an existence. There are not enough radicals in the Southern cities to support a party journal decently. This class of newspapers is therefore dependent for its existence upon alms from the radical party in the North, and that is no parsimoniously distributed that the radical newspapers very badly. Demands of an exorbitant character have been made by sundry Southern editors, and Republican publicans upon the Congressional

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man of them attending to his own private business, acquire competency for union with their fellow-citizens in those matters which they think fit to confide to the common civic arm, and behind which they think it fit and necessary to enlist their united civic force. Tangled in the town meeting, the supervisors' board, the city rule, these men become competent to the larger union of cities, towns, and counties in the State, and for successful parts in the administration of the State's affairs, that is, the affairs in which all the people of all the cities, towns, and counties of the State have a common and co-equal concern, and to insure the successful management of which, they think it fit and necessary to combine their larger and united force. Instructed thus in these beginnings of local self-government, success in self-government by thirty millions of people becomes possible. The States or the people of the States combine in a Federal union for, and to insure, the successful management of those common and universal concerns which they think fit to guarantee the stability of, and to establish, with their aggregated national power.

Any particular State Government may have existed before some city grew to its present size, but to argue thence, as the Union League Club does, that the city can derive its right to be governed, and the measure and kind of its government, solely from the State, is to mistake success for failure, and to forget that self-government, be it local or be it national, is inseparable from freedom, and has no better warrant for a widely dispersed nation of thirty-eight millions than for a crowded island of eight hundred thousand.

These are merely the broad lines of democratic doctrine. We draw no nice distinctions here, and stir no controversies that have been concluded by battle or the Courts. The essential thing is, that each and all these larger or smaller units shall, as they stand, be free; and, speaking for every lover of a pure democracy, without reference to the party lines which here and now divide us, we tell this Union League Club, and the revisers of our Constitution assembled at Albany, that it is insupportably galling to the soul of every instructed freeman whether in those personal rights and privileges which he has assigned and surrendered to no Government, his freedom is assailed by city, State, national, or foreign foes; or whether in his freedom and local self-government his liberties are usurped by State, or national, or foreign foes; or whether in his right as a citizen of any State his freedom is assailed by the citizens of other States united, or by foreign arms; or whether as an American he is oppressed by foreign and despotic powers. Foreign, alien, and despotic, all power must be which surpasses its own lawful limits, and usurps control from the nation of its national affairs, from the State of its State affairs, from the city and town of their local affairs, or from the individual freeman of those reserved unaliened liberties which are the core of his manhood, as those are of his civic freedom and his nation's sovereignty.

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